

Multi-tiered System of Supports in a Comprehensive Reading Program

It is the intent of this document to articulate the comprehensive, research-based, data-driven approach to reading instruction/intervention as described in the [Rhode Island’s Comprehensive Literacy Guidance](#).

Tier 1 Core Instruction

A “guaranteed” curriculum is often defined as a system through which all students have an equal opportunity (time and access) to learn rigorous content. A guaranteed curriculum promotes equity, giving all children equal opportunity to learn essential content and to provide this opportunity, curricular materials, and instructional approaches must be grounded in research and implemented with fidelity. Through its partnership with EdReports, RIDE has identified examples of high-quality curricula. How the curriculum is implemented is critical to this process; if implementation varies significantly from teacher to teacher, then student outcomes will also vary significantly from classroom to classroom. Instructional guidelines including minutes per day have been outlined by each publisher and should be adhered to as closely as possible. See sample literacy block below:

Instruction	Time	Class Configuration	Instructional Examples
90 minutes Tier 1: Core Literacy Instruction	25-45 minutes daily	Whole group	Teaching the core reading program and supplementing with materials to fill any gaps in foundational reading skills (e.g., phonemic awareness, encoding)
	45-65 minutes; approximately 15-20 minutes per small group daily	Small groups on a rotating basis	Reviewing phonics instruction, word building activities, reading decodable texts and moving to leveled when students can accurately read real and nonsense words of all syllable types.
		Group 1: 15 minutes	
		Group 2: 15 minutes	
	Group 3: 15 minutes		
Tier 2 Intervention	15-25 minutes 3-5 times per week	Individual/small group	In addition to the core literacy instruction, address specific area of need on the literacy continuum.
Tier 3 Intervention	30 minutes- 1 hour 3-5 times per week	Individual/small group with highly trained support personnel	Intensive, formal, structured literacy-based intervention delivered with fidelity still focusing on specific area of need.

Inherent within this first tier of core instruction is the assumption that Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is the foundation for teaching, learning, assessment, and curriculum development. “The central practical premise of UDL is that a curriculum should include alternatives to make it accessible and appropriate for individuals with different backgrounds, including multi-language learners (MLLs), learning styles, abilities, and disabilities in widely varied learning contexts. Ensuring culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students’ access to core literacy instruction is increasingly important as the number of these students in Rhode Island continues to increase.



In some cases, a curriculum may fall short in a critical area of language instruction in which case supplemental programs, materials, and methods may be needed to address the gap. For instance, some curricula may need additional support materials in phonological awareness, phonics, decodable texts, spelling, morphology, vocabulary, or syntax instruction in order to address all facets of Structured Literacy.

The most difficult problem for students with dyslexia is learning to read. Unfortunately, popularly employed reading approaches, such as Guided Reading, Balanced Literacy, whole language, or cueing strategies are not effective for struggling readers. These approaches are especially ineffective for students with dyslexia because they do not focus on the decoding skills these students need to succeed in reading. This approach not only helps students with dyslexia, but there is substantial evidence that it is more effective for *all* readers.

At the heart of every successful MTSS is a focus on improved Tier 1 or core instruction before moving to specialized intervention strategies. When a school culture emphasizes best practices and rigor for all, there will likely be improved student performance. Rigor is not setting a student up for failure; it is saying, “We are going to expect the best and do what we can to help him or her meet those expectations.” With a rigorous and Common Core aligned Tier 1 program, 80% of students should reach grade-level benchmarks as shown on district screening tools. Screening measures administered three times per year are integral to determining success of Tier 1 programming and the need for additional instruction/support. For MLLs, language acquisition as a data source is an important part of screening for this group.

In Tier 1, districts should plan for the prevention of deficits before using interventions. This does not mean that students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) will be ignored; rather, providing the best possible core instruction before moving to Tier 2 interventions. The MTSS pyramid is “healthy” when you have a large base at Tier 1; If, for example, districts find that 50 percent of students are enrolled in Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, it’s vital to build out your Tier 1 universal supports. Disaggregating data is particularly helpful—but don’t just look at overall proficiency rates. Dig into the assessments. Look at subtests or subsections diagnostically to break down reading components. Patterns may emerge that can be addressed most efficiently by shoring up the core.

At every level in a tiered model, fidelity is important. Fidelity focuses on the degree to which instruction and intervention are delivered in the manner intended. In Tier one, the integrity of instruction focuses on the degree to which core instruction is delivered in the way intended, based on lesson study (or lesson planning), the presence of effective instructional strategies and the degree to which those instructional strategies are appropriate to the skill level and demographic characteristics of the students (language, abilities).

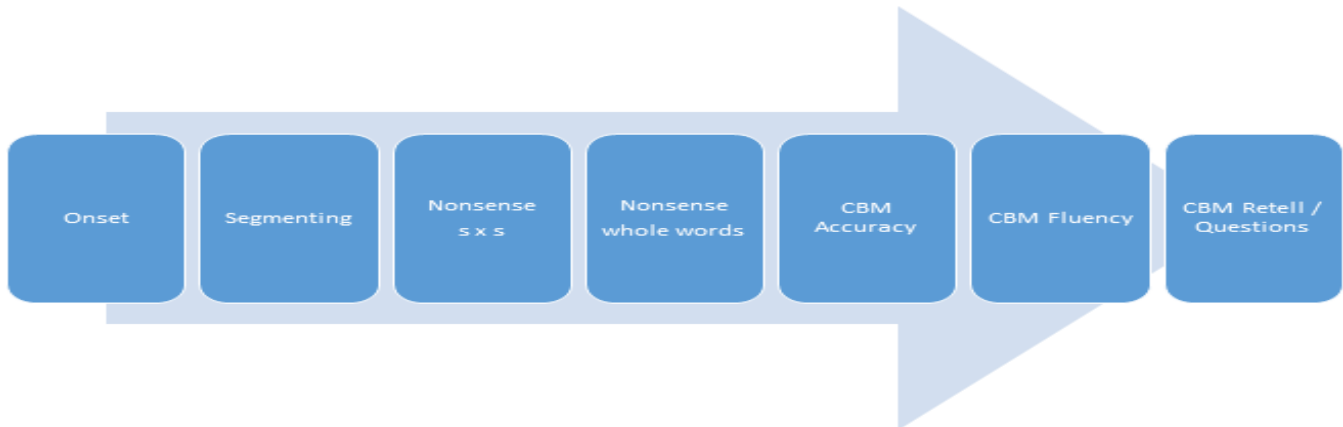
Sometimes students struggle with their learning, despite the accommodations and adjustments that classroom teachers make. When this happens, the second tier of MTSS offers immediate, targeted interventions often called Tier 2 interventions. These interventions follow a standard protocol that is delivered with fidelity. In Tier 2, screening measures are used to identify students who will need more than the core to meet learning outcomes. This is in addition to Tier 1 instruction; students must receive both tiers. Interventions must be evidence-based, matched to student needs and culturally and linguistically responsive. These interventions are most often delivered by the classroom teacher to a



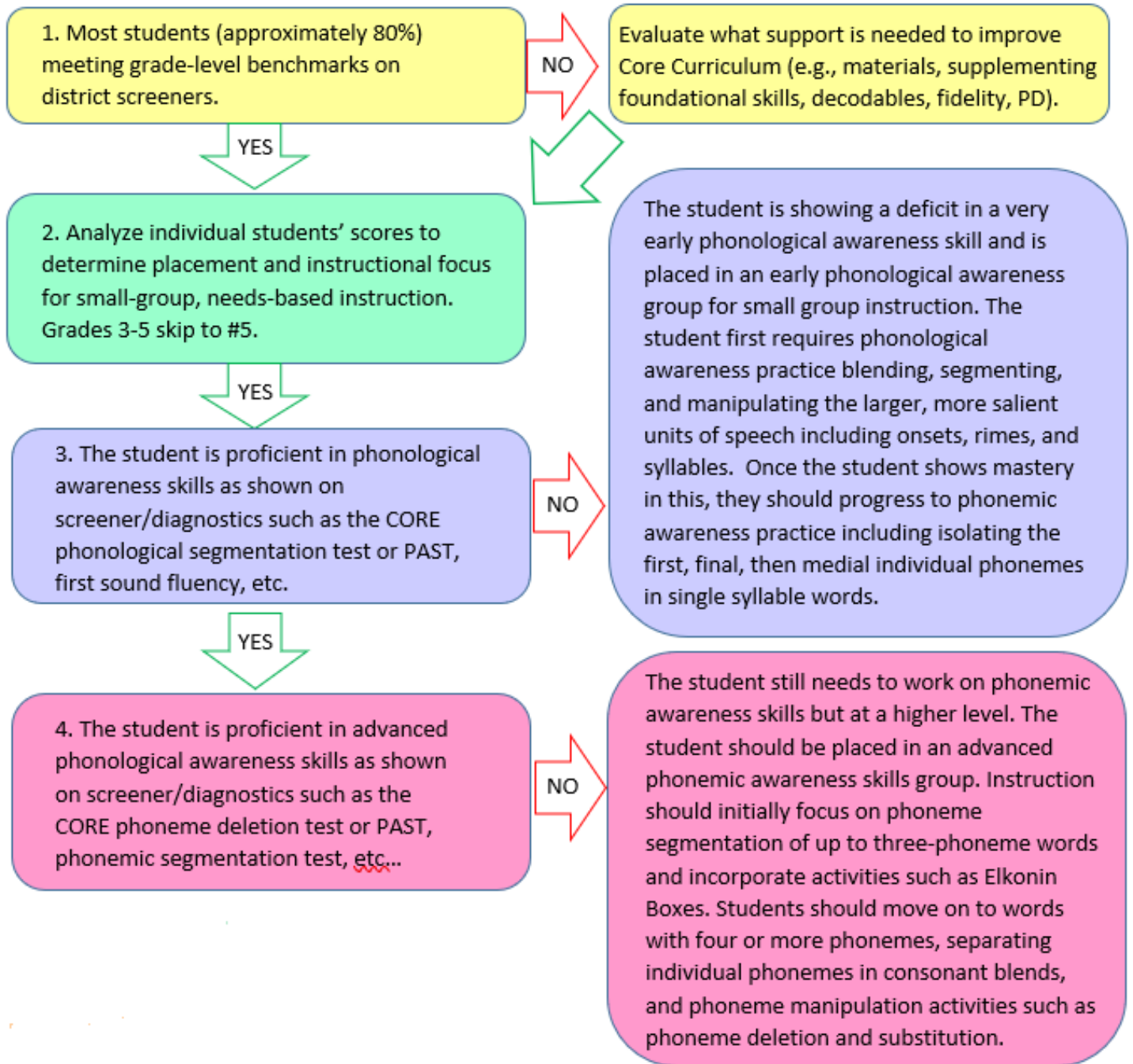
group of students who have similar needs. Error analysis of patterns in screening measures/probes and/or [diagnostic assessments](#) assist in determining starting points within the skill groupings.

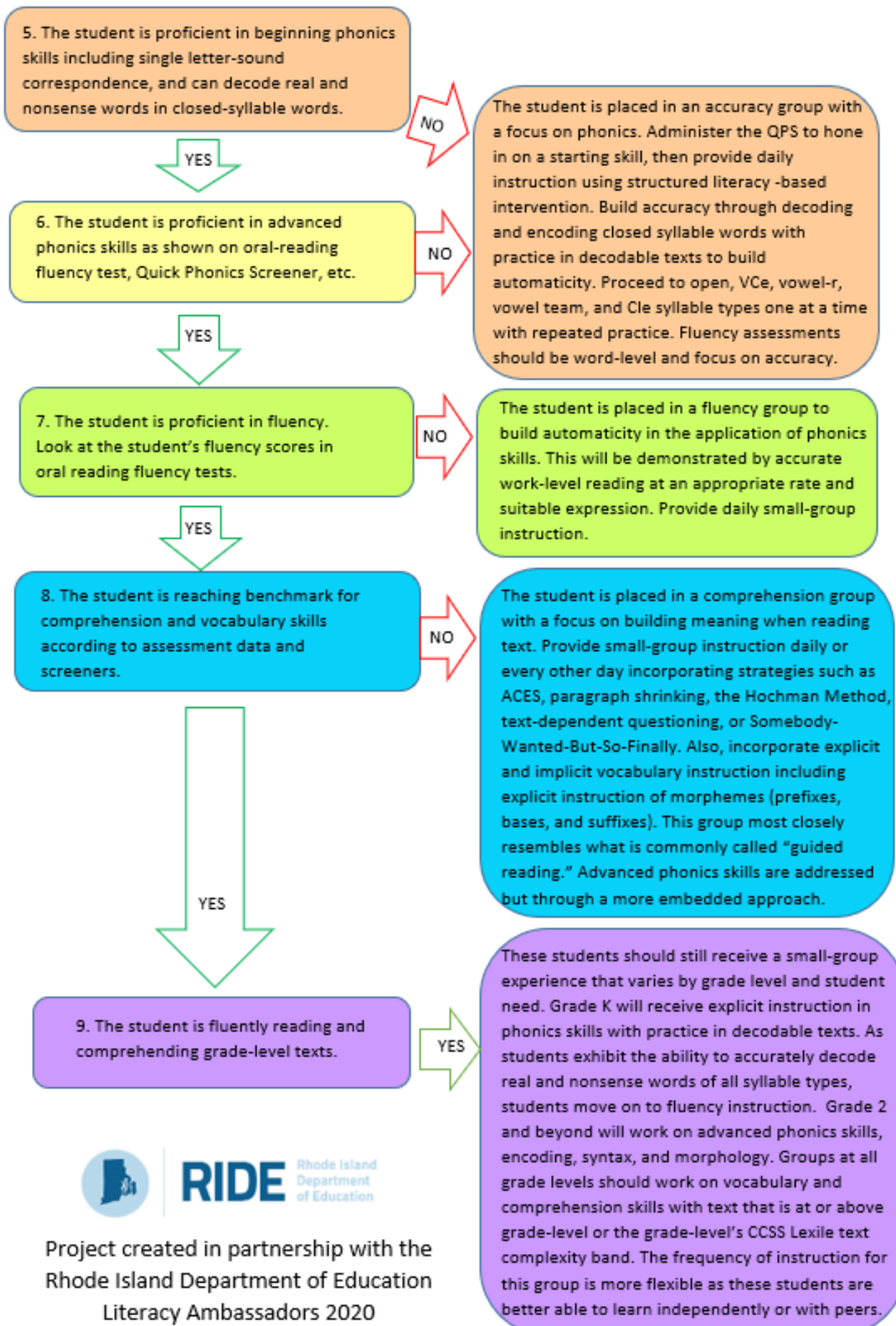
K-5 Screening to Determine Tiers 2 and 3 Support

Critical Reading Skills for Grouping*



Intervention Decision-Making Flow Chart

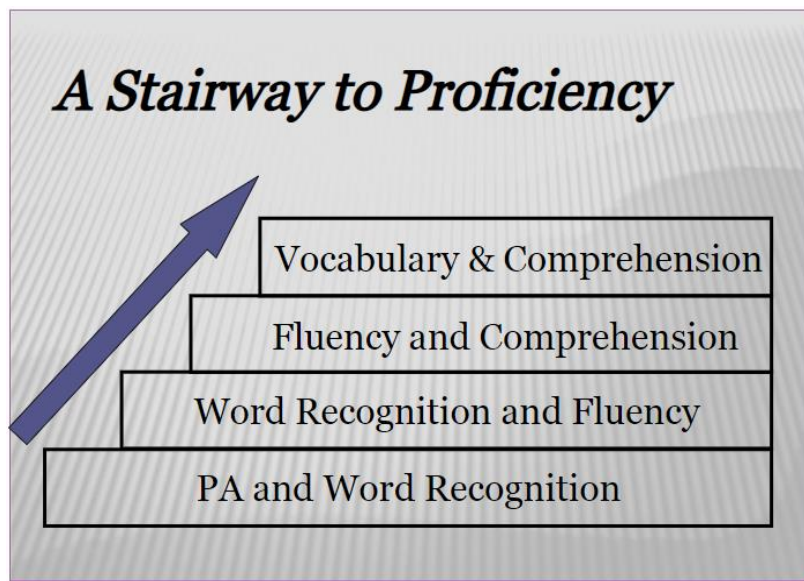




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Project created in partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Education Literacy Ambassadors 2020

Standardized, targeted small-group instruction using a validated intervention program. “Evidence-based” at Tier 2 means that the intervention program has been demonstrated through rigorous research to have a positive impact on target outcomes for students at risk, when delivered with fidelity. Aligning data and instruction can lead to instruction that is most likely to benefit the students. Suggestions of [research-based interventions](#) have been offered to assist educators in matching student needs to effective strategies. There is a balance struck in this process. For instance, struggling readers often present with a range of needs. However, not all of these needs can be addressed during small group instruction during a 15-20 minute lesson a few times a week. In this model, the teacher starts with the lowest need on the continuum and addresses that one target area (see Staircase to Proficiency, Walpole). Once a skill is taught, students will need frequently distributed practice to bring that skill to fluent use. The following is an extensive and meticulously organized list of apps that may be helpful to teachers looking for practice opportunities via [digital apps](#). Once a student reaches proficiency in the target area for three progress monitoring data points in a row, the next area of need on the continuum becomes the new focus for intervention. Over time, targeted temporary instruction in progressively more difficult skills will lead to addressing higher-level proficiencies. [Lesson plan templates](#) can help organize small group instructional time if no program or method is being used.



Students in Tier 2 must be progress monitored regularly by the person providing the intervention. Interventions are coupled with progress monitoring and data-based decision making to quantify a student’s rate of improvement and to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions. Student progress on predetermined goals is consistently collected, graphed, and analyzed to determine if the student is responding to the intervention. The data is then used to inform whether to continue, adjust, or end the intervention. If students are not making progress that would lead to gap closure after adjustments are made, students are then in need of a intensifying and individualizing through the systematic use of assessment data, validated interventions, and research-based adaptation strategies, known as Tier 3 intervention.

The third tier of support within MTSS provides the most intense, individualized level of instruction using evidence based programs/methods for both the skill need(s) and student characteristics (e.g., ELL, IEP), and considers the [taxonomy](#) of intensive intervention. Just as with Tier 2, Tier 3 support does not replace Tier 1 core reading instruction; it is in addition to. Tier 3 is made up of specifically designed systematic instruction for those few students who are not making sufficient progress with targeted interventions or who need a greater instructional intensity to accelerate their progress because of a more significant learning gap. It also is used for students who have proven nonresponsive to Tier 2. Intensive

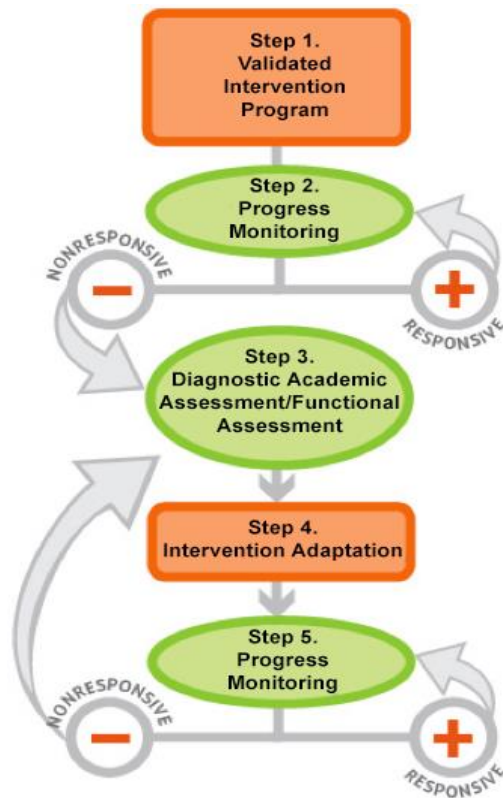


interventions are characterized by increased intensity (e.g., smaller group, increased time) and individualization of academic or behavioral intervention. While Tier 2 interventions may include published programs or methods, Tier 3 almost always includes evidence-based materials, methods and programs. Therefore, fidelity matters.

Fidelity refers to how closely prescribed procedures are followed and the degree to which educators implement programs, assessments, and plans the way they were intended. When we implement interventions and assessments with fidelity, intervention teams can make more accurate decisions about an individual student’s progress and future intervention needs. The MTSS system consists of regular meetings to determine student response to the intervention, barriers to the delivery of the intervention, and technical assistance to deliver the intervention as intended. Sufficiency is measured through the use of documentation that measures the degree to which the intervention was provided as intended (e.g., number of minutes or percentage of plan components) and the type of intervention, to name a few.

When a school utilizes an MTSS model, Data Based Instruction (DBI) begins when a student is not responding adequately to a targeted, otherwise effective, [evidence-based intervention](#) that is being implemented with fidelity (i.e., as intended by the researchers) in Tiers 2 or 3. DBI consists of the five steps outlined in the table and depicted in the graphic. Notice that the graphic indicates how to proceed when a student is responsive or nonresponsive to the intervention.

DBI Steps
Step 1. Validated Intervention Program: Make the secondary intervention more intensive through quantitative changes to the instruction that a student receives.
Step 2. Progress Monitoring: Evaluate the student’s response to the intensified intervention by collecting progress monitoring data.
Step 3. Diagnostic Assessment: Collect and review data (e.g., progress monitoring data, student work samples, observations) to identify areas of difficulty and to make informed decisions about how to adapt the intervention.
Step 4. Intervention Adaptation: Adapt the intervention based on the student’s needs as determined by the diagnostic assessment.
Step 5. Progress Monitoring: Continue to collect progress monitoring data to evaluate the student’s response to the instructional adaptations.



Description of DBI Steps Graphic

If students with severe and persistent learning difficulties are unable to make adequate progress, teachers might need to implement Steps 3, 4, and 5 of the DBI process multiple times to reach the required levels of intensity and individualization. In this way, DBI is an *iterative process*: that is, the school team intensifies a practice or program through the cyclical process of diagnostic assessment, intervention adaptation, and progress monitoring.

NCII at American Institutes for Research provides a [Student Progress Monitoring Tool for Data Collection and Progress Monitoring](#). The use of a tool such as this ensures fidelity to the intervention and decision making that is based on student data. For more information see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qz-OIBsB2b0>. To delve into the DBI process at a deeper level, training modules, and materials are provided for school or district [here](#). After the initial training in the DBI process and components, 6 modules covering reading instruction are provided and can be accessed [here](#). If students do not respond to intervention, the following decision tool can be used in the selection of adaptations: <https://www.bwrsd.org/Page/4529>



Role of Diagnostics

First screening tests are used to determine a general pattern of difficulty. Then diagnostic tests are used to determine specific needs. AutoReading subtests can be used diagnostically by analyzing error patterns. aReading Individual Skills Report has a list of developing skills by category. Further diagnostic information is included in table and at

<https://intensiveintervention.org/intensive-intervention/diagnostic-data/example-diagnostic-tools>

Screening	Goal	Diagnostic options
Phonemic Awareness	A student with strong phonological awareness can take orally presented words and segment them into syllables or onset/rime; furthermore, students can orally blend, segment, delete, or substitute phonemes within a word.	Analyze errors from segmenting subtest. If necessary, proceed backward using appropriate sections of a Phonological Awareness inventory or Ellison subtest from CTOPP to assess syllable/onset-rime. Other options include: TOWRE-2, CORE Phoneme Deletion, CORE Phonological Segmentation Test, and the PAST.
Phonics and Word Recognition	A student with strong decoding skills can read new words (real or nonsense) presented in lists or text.	Analyze errors on Nonsense, Spelling inventory, or Oral Reading Fluency subtests. Note if errors are in high-frequency words, decodable words, words of a specific syllable type, or multi-syllabic words. If necessary, administer appropriate sections of a phonics survey TOWRE Sight Word and Phonemic Decoding. Other options include: Word Journeys: Developmental Spelling Analysis, and CORE Phonics Survey (K-12).
Fluency	A student with strong reading fluency can read text accurately, at an appropriate rate, with suitable expression.	None needed if accuracy is 98% or higher on running record or CBM measure such as an Oral Reading Fluency assessment. Below 98% analyze errors.
Vocabulary	A student's vocabulary is highly correlated with reading comprehension as they derive new word meanings from reading, listening, and word study.	Vocabulary "skills" equate to word meanings. A diagnostic test would tell us which of the million-plus words in English a student doesn't know. If needed, CORE vocabulary or the PPVT are options to consider. Students can also be assessed on their knowledge and understanding of morphemes.
Comprehension	A student's comprehension is a complex interaction between the demands of the text, the student's prior knowledge and the student's purpose for reading. Curricula that build strong background knowledge aid comprehension by adding to a student's schema.	Analyze errors on retell/questions on CBM (Oral Reading Fluency) subtest (Group Skills Report); aReading Individual Skills Report (Literature and Informational: Developing Skills); RICAS analysis; FP Benchmark Assessment; CompEfficiency may be useful for older grades. Also, the Multi-Level Academic Skills Inventory, Revised (MASI-R), retell as part of a running record, Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark, Core Reading Maze and QRI VI IRI.



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